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dulge farther at this time; so I placed him in a large cage with some canary birds, where he remained feasting on nine scorpions a day, until he had recovered the use of his wing, when I set him free.

Scorpions are generally found two or three together, sometimes in larger numbers. They shed their skins without a rent, coming out at the mouth, like the snakes. They moult when they are about half-grown, and again when they come to maturity, and I do not know that they ever again cast their skin during the remainder of their life. They live through two winters, as I can testify, and may exist many years. They are not possessed of much intelligence, making no nests or preparation for winter, beyond crawling under rocks and other dry and sheltered places. Their principal cerebral developments are amativeness, alimentiveness, and cautiousness.

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## A NOTE FROM THE FAR NORTH.

BY J. T. ROTHROCK.

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EARLY in the year 1865, the writer of this scrap eagerly embraced an opportunity afforded him of visiting the less known parts of North-western North America. The region travelled over lay between the Coast Range and the Rocky Mountains, and from latitude 50° north to 61° north.

From latitude 56°, as far north as Fort Youkon (a post belonging to the Hudson Bay Company, exact position undetermined), a distance of at least 1,500 miles, the country was, and still is, in part, a *terra incognita*. It is to be hoped that ere long much of the uncertainty hanging over it will have been cleared up. Geographers, it is

true, did manage to fill up the blank in a wonderfully inaccurate way, just as they used to—

“In Afric’s maps  
With savage pictures fill the gaps,  
And o’er uninhabitable downs,  
Place elephants for want of towns.”

Even of the upper waters of the Fraser, Nasse, or Skena Rivers, no trustworthy chart existed. Much less could we expect those of the Pelly or Liard to be accurate.

At Fort St. James, on Stuart’s Lake, latitude  $54^{\circ} 44'$ , longitude (approximate)  $124^{\circ} 48'$ , the unknown country may be said to begin. Here for the first time we notice the outlying peaks of another set of mountains, which completely fill the valley (a degree farther north) between the Coast Range and the Rocky Mountains.

These mountains, though known by name to geographers, have always had their altitude underestimated. Near Stuart’s Lake they are as high as three thousand feet above the general level of the lakes. At Lake Tatleh they rise to five thousand feet. At Bear Lake, about latitude  $56^{\circ} 15' N.$ , they are from six thousand to eight thousand, and near Lake Toutah they rise often as high as ten thousand feet. These altitudes are only given as above the general, or lake levels. Add to them from three thousand to five thousand feet, and it will at once be seen that they attain no mean elevation above the sea level. Perhaps I can give no more just idea of the general features of the country around Lake Toutah, than to state that the land rises into a plateau, about 3,500 feet above the sea level. This plateau, lying between the Coast and Rocky Mountains, is dotted over with peaks of the above-mentioned heights. Sometimes neighboring peaks are joined by their bases; often one finds them completely isolated. Nature seems to have set at defiance all law and order,

and to have been governed only by the wildest caprice in their distribution. No axis can be traced, and it is a physical impossibility to walk for a day in a straight line over the prairie plateau at their base. One may ascend, as a rule, the southern slopes of these peaks readily enough, but the northern slopes almost invariably give you from 1,500 to 2,000 feet of sheer precipice at a single leap. Skirting their bases are found dwarfed balsam trees, whose limbs are festooned with the long gray lichen eaten by the Caribou, or now and again a stray cottonwood may present itself. So thickly are the peaks distributed over the country, that the original plateau is seen only as a narrow and almost treeless valley, winding about between the peaks. Yet by following these valleys one may reach the waters of the Liard without crossing a single mountain.

The storms which sweep through the passes must, at times, be fearful. I remember seeing a tree (the largest one indeed which I noticed at this elevation) full two feet in diameter, that had been twisted off by the wind, and carried two hundred feet away from the stump.

Near the top the peaks are bald, and offer no other inducement to the adventurous botanist than a few lichens. Even the snow will not lie on the summits during the winter months, but is blown away into the valleys below, and into the gulches which streak the declivities. Hence, during the winter, when the valleys are buried beneath twelve or fourteen feet of snow, the Caribou seek the mountain tops to eat the lichens. The valleys are worn out into deep gulches by the melting snow, and everywhere you are met by miniature cañons in crossing them. Even in mid-summer the snow falls to a depth of a foot or more, at times, on the mountain sides. Among

these mountains lies Lake Toutah, a beautiful sheet of water, full sixty miles long. At certain places the mountains come jutting down to the very water's edge, and at others recede so as to allow a beautiful open prairie to stretch along the edge. This lake is the head of Finlay's Branch of Peace River, which in turn empties into McKenzie's River. Yet within less than two hundred yards of its southern end rises a tributary of the Skena River, which empties into the Pacific Ocean in latitude  $54^{\circ}$  N.

The extremes of temperature are great. September 15th, in latitude  $56^{\circ}$  N., the thermometer stood at 6 o'clock, A. M., at  $15^{\circ}$  Far., at 2 o'clock, P. M., at  $83^{\circ}$  Far. After the avalanches and solar heat have carried off the snow from the mountain sides and valleys, the vegetation again starts up with a rapidity that would astonish even a native of the tropics. Hardly a fortnight elapses after giving up the snowshoes, before one finds the lower and more fertile spots covered with verdure, and blooming as a garden. Among these early flowers we find a *Nardosmia*, *Calypso borealis*, several species of Violets, a *Polemonium*, *Valerian*, etc. These mountains form an Indian paradise. Secure here from any present or prospective annoyance from the whites, the Siccannee, Nahanni, Koninah, and Kloodini tribes hunt the Caribou, Grizzly Bear, Moose, Beaver, and Marten. Perhaps the beavers are nowhere in the world so numerous as among the Peak Mountains. The Indians are, as a rule, friendly, and no man of ordinary courage need to be deterred through fear from going where he lists. To the young, active adventurer, who wishes to make a name for himself as an explorer, no more promising field than the one we have noticed can present itself.